

INTERFAITH Newsletter

PREMIER ISSUE

❖ THE SAN FRANCISCO INTERFAITH COUNCIL ❖

SEPTEMBER 1999

This is my first opportunity to present myself to you as the newly elected Chairperson. I want to tell you a little about my hopes for the Interfaith Council, but first I want to thank The Rev. Laird Stuart for his excellent leadership of the past two years.

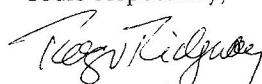
In many ways, the Council has continued to grow and grow-up during Laird's two years of leadership as chair. The most outstanding accomplishment of the Council, to my mind, was the establishment of the new Interfaith Chaplaincy at the Youth Guidance Center. U.S. District Judge Charles Breyer was still in private practice and serving on the Juvenile Probation Commission when Laird invited him to a meeting of the Council's Board of Directors. That opened up a conversation about how the religious community could be more deeply and helpfully involved in San Francisco's juvenile justice system. Those conversations led to the development of a proposal for the chaplaincy program there and to the search for funding. We were successful in finding the means to do it, and have hired The Rev. Toni Dunbar as our chaplain, and she is functioning in high gear at the Youth Guidance Center. I hope this program will continue to take shape at the Center and in San Francisco neighborhoods, with local religious communities and institutions participating at both arenas. Many members of the interfaith council board have been part of this effort, but it was Laird who created the opening for it on our agenda and in our life as an organization.

One of my hopes for the Council is that we grow in our capacity to manage programs which we have already initiated, such as the YGC Chaplaincy and the Interfaith Winter Shelter (which you will read about else where in this newsletter). I know we will discover the need for other programs of care and compassion, and I hope we will be able to respond. But there is a definite limit to what we are able directly to do, so I hope we will also become clearer about when and how to use our influence in behalf of the weak and vulnerable. An issue important to me is the effort to save the Laguna Honda Hospital. I would hope the Interfaith Council will play a major role in efforts to save the Hospital by helping to pass the bond measure required to re-build it. I was appointed to the committee which developed the recommendations about rebuilding Laguna Honda, and my congregation is situated right across the street from it. I know first hand what an amazing institution it is, and how necessary it is to the well-being of many people, elderly and disabled, who would have no place else to go.

I know that there are different stances among the religious traditions and communities in the Council about the role of religion in the public life. I hope we deepen our knowledge of and appreciation for one another as we explore these matters and become an effective influence for good in our city.

I look forward to serving with you.

Yours respectfully,


Roger E. Ridgway

Mission Statement

**Celebrating our diverse faiths
and spiritual traditions, the San
Francisco Interfaith Council
brings people together to build
understanding and serve our
community.**



Juvenile Hall Chaplaincy Completes First Year

by Rev. Alan Jones
Chair of Chaplaincy Committee



Rev. Toni Dunbar

After many months of behind-the-scenes planning, worrying and fund-raising, the SFIC Juvenile Hall Chaplain began work in August 1998. Rev. Toni Dunbar has done a wonderful and extraordinary job in establishing a position, program and a network of relationships. Toni's

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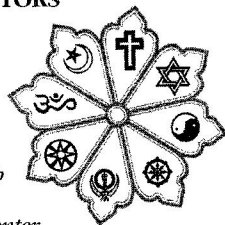
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Sister Elizabeth Padilla
Brahma Kumaris Center

OFFICE ADDRESS

401 Baker Street
San Francisco, CA 94117
office/fax: 415/474-1321



Chaplaincy Project Wish List

You can be part of the chaplaincy project! Chaplain Toni Dunbar needs the involvement of San Francisco congregations in many ways:

Volunteer your expertise. Mentors are needed who relate well to young people and are willing to give time and care.

Equipment is needed. Here is a list of some items which Rev. Dunbar needs: Audiovisual equipment, a television set, VCR, TV stand, overhead projector and stand, slide projector and screen, CD player, cassette player/recorder.

She can also use office equipment and furniture including a PC or laptop computer, color printer, paper shredder and paper trimmer. Do you or your congregants have any desks, work and side chairs, bookcases and file cabinets?

If you can help in any of these ways, please leave a message for Rev. Dunbar at 415-743-7502. Thanks!

Shelter Program

The 1999/2000 winter shelter program will begin its eleventh year Sunday, November 21 at Trinity Episcopal Church and continue through March 11, 2000. In addition to Trinity, the program will again be hosted by St. Mark's Lutheran Church, First Universalist Unitarian Church and St. Mary's Cathedral.

Congregations are needed once again to provide meals for those seeking shelter. If you are interested, please call:

Rita Semel, 415-673-2190 or

Sr. Elizabeth Padilla, 415-474 1321.

Both dinners and breakfasts are needed. Congregations which provide meals are also asked to serve them to the men in the shelter. You determine the menu. Our shelter guests are easy to please and very grateful for your meal and your presence. The shelter is staffed by Episcopal Community Services.

FAITH JOURNEY

by Rev. Kelvin Sauls

"If the world were merely seductive, that would be easy. If it were merely challenging, that would be no problem. But I rise in the morning torn between a desire to improve the world, and a desire to enjoy the world. This makes it hard to plan the day."

E.B. White

Growing up and living in the furnace of apartheid has taught me many things, above which that God is still alive and well. This is sometimes how paradoxical faith can be. For to see and know what God is doing one need not go to the places of comfort, but instead, go to those places where the fires of testing burn most furiously. These were the fires of institutional racism and de jure discrimination which played an essen-

tial role in melting and molding my faith journey. This situation of tension and tears has led me to ask the question, "Why, O why, Lord?"

Why, O Lord are you so passive amidst racial segregation, discrimination and exploitation? Why, O Lord are you so silent while we are surrounded by oppression and repression? Look at the tears and fears of my peers. Are you aware of it all, O Lord? It happens, Lord, and you are aware of it all. "Why, O why, Lord?"

I grew up in a very neutral Methodist church and these socio-political conditions made me question my Christian faith. For it was in this very same faith that I receive my instruction. I was very active in church, youth and Sunday school. But, irrespective of this and my conversion experience in high school, I

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Rabbi Pamela F. Baugh

Annual Mayor's Interfaith Prayer Breakfast

Mark your calendar now! The second Annual Mayor's Interfaith Prayer Breakfast will be held Tuesday, November 23, 1999, 6:30 - 8:30 a.m. at the Cathedral Hill Hotel, 1101 Van Ness Avenue. Suggested donation for the vegetarian meal is \$15, according to co-chairs Rabbi Pamela Frydman Baugh and Rev. Jimmie Hardaway.

Congregants and friends are cordially invited to attend this very special occasion, the co-chairs said. "Our City is very diverse. The purpose of the breakfast is to share our diversity and enjoy each other's company," they added.

Donations are needed to underwrite the cost of the breakfast, as the \$15 donation does not cover all costs. Individuals and congregations can be a breakfast sponsor by donating \$100.

Members of the faith community are invited to submit a prayer in both English and the language of that community or denomination. Submissions must be camera ready and fit into a 5"x8" layout to be included in the souvenir prayer booklet. Submissions must be received by October 15, in order to be included in the booklet, which will be distributed at the breakfast.

For further information on registration and sponsorship, please call Rev. Hardaway at Macedonia Baptist Church, 415-346-1154, ext.5. To submit a prayer, please call Rabbi Frydman-Baugh at Or Shalom Jewish Community, 415-242-9993 ext.2.

Second Annual Mayor's Interfaith Prayer Breakfast

Registration and Sponsorship Form

(Please print legibly)

Name: _____

Title: _____

Congregation (optional): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip code: _____

I/we want to be a sponsor of the Second Annual Mayor's Interfaith Prayer Breakfast. Enclosed is a donation of \$100 for each sponsor or couple. Please acknowledge our sponsorship as follows on the honor sheet at the breakfast:

Print legibly the exact way you want your name or the name of your congregation to appear.

I/we plan to attend the breakfast. I have enclosed \$15 for each person attending.

Please list legibly the names of all those who will attend.

If you want to register someone now and someone later, simply make a copy of this form and submit the second one later.

Make checks payable to S.F.I.C.
Mail to : Rev. J. Hardaway,
Macedonia Baptist Church,
2135 Sutter Street,
San Francisco, CA 94115

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Faith Journey

discovered that my faith was becoming more and more irrelevant. The more I began to understand how the South African society was infected, polluted and destroyed by both the ideology and theology of apartheid, the more I started to question and doubt God.

"Why, O why, Lord" did you create me? Did you make me to be a victim to be put to scorn forever? Why Lord, why? Are there limits to your love? Is there a possibility of life before death? If so, then why, why do you keep me waiting? However, what was really paradoxical, was the fact that all these questioning did not lead me to abandon or abolish my faith. Instead, it resulted into a desire to dig deeper into my faith. I began searching for light and life amidst death and darkness. I was intentionally searching for and authentic dialogue between my faith and my fate.

This process of action-reflection was a powerful turn in my faith journey a journey that was still filled with questions, doubts, fears, and apartheid. My faith journey now included meditation, biblical reflection and instruction, and political action. It led me to an intentional and intimate relationship with God. My emphasis was on understanding this God who silently stood by and allowed oppression and repression to continue. As my journey continued, I had to come to the conclusion that my search to understand God was essentially my search for self. I had to renounce my image of self and God that apartheid offered me. This enabled me to come to terms with the fact that apartheid was a heresy. God was a God of justice, equality and unswerving love. The breakthrough helped me to understand the fact that God spoke one word and created us all uniquely, yet equally. Now I had come to understand that Jesus loves me irrespective of my race and/or social status. In those time of distress, I came to realize that South Africa's way was not God's way. And that God did not

Concert of Sacred Music

November 21, Sunday, 3:30 p.m.

St. Mary's Cathedral

Eight San Francisco congregations celebrating their 150th anniversaries will host a concert of sacred music. They will present not only their own particular music but music of other faiths as well to showcase the rich diversity of San Francisco. A reception will follow the concert.

The following congregations were founded in 1849, the year of the Gold Rush. The sesquicentennial congregations are:

- First Baptist Church
- Congregation Emanu-El
- Old First Presbyterian Church
- Congregation Sherith Israel
- First Congregational Church
- St. Mark's Lutheran Church
- St. Francis of Assisi
- First Unitarian Universalist Church

Although the concert is FREE, tickets will be required. For more information, call Sr. Elizabeth Padilla at the SFIC office: 415-474-1321.

create a "kaffir," but "something beautiful, something good." My faith journey, thence, in some ways became one of accepting self and feeling comfortable in my skin. It was surely a journey of self-conscientization and understanding God's intention for creation.

What was really strange was that this journey of faith did not become an end in itself. Instead, it opened up a Pandora box filled with more questions. This was, for me, an invitation to further my search of understanding God and God's plan. A plan to for all people to have Shalom. This discovery was so overwhelming that it led me to ask my old question in a different light, "Why, O why, Lord, did you open my eyes?"

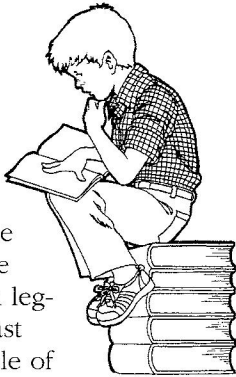
My faith journey helped me conclude that the church is to remain, and continue to truthfully become the conscience of the world. I strongly believe that our Christian faith is personal, but not private. I believe that this faith is very personal, yet profoundly social. And I agree fully with words of Dr. Martin Luther

King, Jr. that, "...any religion that professes to save (peoples') souls, but does not deal with the social and economic factors which plague the society, is spiritually moribund and awaits its day to be buried" As I continue to journey, I cannot help but to meditate on the words of the prophet Micah, "God has shown you O people what is good and what the Lord requires of you; to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8).

This faith journey is a continuous process. My spiritual growth has not stopped me from asking questions. I now only ask them differently. Because I have come to accept God as the primary liberator, my question is now, "Why not, O Lord?" It is then with these many questions that I welcome you on this journey. With these questions I intend to walk and work with you to allow God to use us and let, "thy kingdom come; thy will be done (in San Francisco) as it is in heaven."



Child Care Task Force



When the welfare reform legislation passed last year, many people of good will were concerned that the children and parents who now have new rules would suffer. How could we in the faith communities help?

The Child Care Task Force formed about a year ago, which includes experts from the Department of Human Services, Community College, Head Start and representative from Interfaith congregations. We concluded that simple short term projects will be most successful.

Our first project was a clothing drive in conjunction with Good Will Industries. Approximately \$3,000 in vouchers to be used in Good Will Stores were collected. Our next project was collecting supplies for backpacks donated for graduates from Head Start going into school for the first time. Over 500 backpacks were filled with a variety of school supplies.

On October 25, we are kicking off a book drive for preschool children. We ask that each congregation collect new books and bring them to St. Mary's Cathedral at 10:00 a.m. where they will hear a presentation about current day care programs. The Centers that are most in need will receive the books.

Please identify the person, committee or group in your congregation that is concerned with children in San Francisco

On behalf of children in need, Thank you. Having a book of one's own makes such a difference.



Children's Book Drive Kick-Off

October 25, Monday at 10:00 a.m.

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Please identify the person, committee or group in your congregation that is concerned with children in San Francisco.

Name of Congregation: _____

Contact Person: _____

Tel. (day): _____ Tel. (eve): _____

Fax no.: _____ E-mail address: _____

Please phone or fax the above information to Mary Culp at 415-337-1722 or mail to: 264 Yerba Buena Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94127

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Juvenile Hall Chaplaincy

energetic and compassionate leadership has inspired many others who work in the spiritual life program with the young people at Juvenile Hall. She now has pastoral oversight, religious education and a variety of services in place at the Hall and is building a community network through religious agencies in our San Francisco communities. With Foundation support we now have in place two intern positions working alongside the Chaplain to build a broader network of support.

Central to the remarkable success of the program has been the active involvement in the program of Chief Probation Officer Jessie Williams. He is a firm believer in an active chaplaincy program and is fully supportive of Toni's expressly INTERFAITH approach. He also sees the development of a strong chaplaincy program as central to building a

healthy community among youth, staff and administration at Juvenile Hall.

We are also grateful for the active support of the San Francisco Foundation Faiths Initiative (Dwayne Marsh) and the Ford Foundation (Landon Williams) for help in making a strong supporting organization for the program.

Toni Dunbar is a powerful and dynamic speaker with a great story to tell about chaplaincy at Juvenile Hall. She welcomes invitations to speak and preach. She is receiving many. Thank you Toni for all your work; and thanks to all of the volunteers who maintain the spiritual life program. Thank you Chief Williams and the Juvenile Probation Commission; and thank you to the Foundations and others who have given practical support for this excellent

Events

October 25, Monday 10 a.m.

CHILDREN'S BOOK DRIVE KICKOFF, St. Mary's Cathedral

November 21, Sunday 3:30 p.m.

CONCERT OF SACRED MUSIC

Eight Congregation Celebrates 150th Anniversary, St. Mary's Cathedral

November 23, Tuesday 6:30-8:30 a.m.

THE ANNUAL MAYOR'S INTERFAITH PRAYER BREAKFAST

Cathedral Hill Hotel

Happy 5760

As the new year begins, contrition fills our thoughts

Some of our days were dark with grief. Many a tear furrowed our cheeks: alas for the tender ties that were broken! We look back with sorrow, as the new year begins.

As the new year begins, tears well up within us.

Yet we look ahead with hope, giving thanks for the daily miracle of renewal, for the promise of good to come. May this Rosh Hashanah, birthday of the world, be our day of rebirth into life and peace, serenity and safety, as the new year begins.

As the new year begins, so is hope reborn with us!

May you be inscribed in the book of life for a blessing.

~ Prayer For The Jewish New Year

SAN FRANCISCO INTERFAITH COUNCIL
401 Baker Street
San Francisco, CA 94117

A Season of Gratitude

by Rev. Laverne Sasaki of Buddhist Church of SF

Eating time is a great time to remind ourselves of the teachings. Before and after meals, we do gassho (joining hands together) as our humble expression of thanks for our food. We remind ourselves of the sacrifice made by the animals and plants. The taking of their lives for food is not our inherent right as humans, but seen as our selfish act necessary for our survival. So eating is a privilege.

Namo in Namu Amida Butsu (Japanese Buddhist expression of faith) can be understood in this context to mean I am deeply grateful for; Amida Butsu (infinite Buddha) represents all the plants, animals, fowl, and fish that have been sacrificed for our food. So, when we say the Nembutsu (recitation of Buddha's name), we are more aware of oneness with the world. Without the world, *there is no I!*

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